



common carp

Cyprinus carpio

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Cypriniformes
Family:	Cyprinidae

Features

Common carp may attain weights over 50 pounds. The average weight however, is two to five pounds. Two barbels (whisker-like projections) are present at each side of the mouth. The front of the dorsal and anal fins contain a spine with saw-like projections. The dorsal fin is long. The upper body is gray to olive on the back, golden yellow to bronze on the sides, and lighter on the belly. The caudal and anal fins are reddish. The scales are large and diamond-shaped. There is a black dot in the front of each scale. Teeth are present in the throat.

Natural History

The common carp lives in rivers, lakes, ponds, and marshes. It often is found near brush piles and weedy areas and is active in the evening and morning. It eats mostly aquatic insects, crustaceans, small mollusks, and some plant material it finds as it roots in mud on the bottom. It may feed in water so shallow that part of its back sticks out. It reaches maturity at 12 to 15 inches, usually at about three years.

Spawning occurs April through August. The female deposits over 50,000 sticky eggs over submerged objects. Eggs hatch in 12 days. No parental care is given to eggs or young. Common carp may live eight to 20 years.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River; Missouri River; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; exotic

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.